

Pay Attention to What Your Child Watches on TV.

Know what your child is watching on TV. You should know about the shows she sees, but also about the news programs and commercials she watches, too. Make sure TV shows are right for your child's age. Encourage your child to watch shows made for children, including shows on public television stations.

Often, in crisis situations, the TV news will show disturbing or violent images again and again. Keep your child from watching these images over and over.

Teach your child that she shouldn't turn on the TV unless you say it's OK. Watch TV



AFFIRMATION

**What the child says,
he has heard at home.**

~ Nigerian Proverb

with her to help her learn about what she sees. Explain things in words your child knows. Talk back to the TV and to the people shown on TV shows. For instance, if someone on a TV show does something you think is wrong, say so. Let your child hear you talk to the TV, and encourage her to do the same.

Why are these activities important?

Children need guidance from you about what they see on TV. These activities will help your child to:

- ✓ Find words to describe what she sees and the world around her
- ✓ Understand what she sees, including what is real and what is pretend
- ✓ Connect what she sees with her life and the lives of those around her
- ✓ Make choices about TV viewing that keep your values and beliefs in mind
- ✓ Ask questions about what she sees
- ✓ Get comfort from you when she sees scary or painful things on TV



DID YOU KNOW?

According to the U.S. Surgeon General's *Call to Action To Prevent and Decrease Overweight and Obesity*^{*}, in 1999, 13 percent of children aged 6 to 11 years and 14 percent of adolescents aged 12 to 19 years in the United States were overweight. One of the major causes of obesity, the Report explains, is lack of physical activity. The Report says that television and computer and video games only add to children's inactive lifestyles. To help increase physical activity, the Report recommends that you reduce the amount of time you and your family spend doing things like watching TV or playing video games. It also suggests limiting TV time to less than two hours a day.

***The Surgeon General's call to action to prevent and decrease overweight and obesity.** U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service, Office of the Surgeon General; Rockville, MD; 2001.

Activity 1: Just being you is the right thing

What you need

- ✓ Poem on page 70

This activity will help your child feel important and valuable, no matter what other people say to her or about her. Children at every age can feel pressure from their friends and people their age to “fit in” and do what everyone else is doing to “be cool.” This kind of pressure can make children feel that they aren’t good enough as they are. The media can also pressure children, by making things that aren’t real or aren’t healthy look cool. This activity lets you remind your child that she is special and precious just the way she is.

1. Read the poem on page 70 with your child.
2. Ask your child what she thinks about the poem, and how it makes her feel.
3. Ask your child to think of someone she looks up to. This person can be a TV or movie star, a rapper, a sports figure, or a relative.
4. Make a list of that person’s good qualities using worksheet on page 71. For example, does the person tell kids not to smoke cigarettes? If yes, then you can write that on the list.
5. Look over the list of good qualities with your child. Tell your child which traits you see in her. If you want to, write other good things about your child on the list.



JUST BEING YOU IS THE RIGHT THING

*By Sherri Council**

*You don't have to be a star
and receive media attention,
you don't have to record a song
that creates a lot of tension,
you don't have to be a politician
putting on airs of pretension.*

*You don't have to be rough
to show that you are tough,
you don't have to go along with the crowd
and you don't have to be loud.*

*You don't have to hang with the group,
afraid of being left out of the loop.
You don't have to be a king or queen
Because just being you is the right thing.*

**Sherri Council is a poet, author and volunteer
with literacy programs to benefit disadvantaged youth.
She also established the Poetic Tributes to Youth Program
at her church.*

Activity 1: Just being you is the right thing

- ✓ Who does your child look up to?

- ✓ What are this person's good qualities?

- ✓ In the list above, circle the traits you see in your child. Write other good things about your child below.

Activity 2: What's wrong with this picture?

What you need

- ✓ Television program

Because children spend so much time watching TV, it's easy for them to get the wrong idea about what they're seeing. This activity lets you give them the right ideas about things. By watching TV with your child, you can see what the shows are saying and doing. If you don't like the show's messages, you can tell your child why they're not OK. With your help, your child will know whether what she's watching is real or made up. She'll also know that things in real life don't always happen the way they do on TV.

1. Sit down with your child and watch her favorite TV show from start to finish with her.
2. As you watch, really listen to the show, and to the commercials.
3. Point out the things on TV that aren't real. Turn the volume down or off so your child can listen to you. For example, you could say:
 - ✓ In real life, we know our dolls can't dance by themselves. Those dolls can dance because they're cartoons, and cartoons aren't in the real world like us.
 - ✓ It takes a real astronaut to drive a spaceship. Can you picture astronauts Dr. Mae Jemison or Commander Fredrick Gregory in the driver's seat? (See the **Did you Know?** on the next page for more details.)
 - ✓ When people fight or hurt each other on TV, it's not like real life. In real life, that person would be in the hospital. That other person would be arrested by police and might go to jail.

REMEMBER

During a major crisis, or right after it happens, most TV news programs talk only about that event. They may show the same pictures over and over. Don't let your child watch these images. Turn off the TV, or watch something on channels or networks that have shows just for children or shows about learning.

4. If your child is younger, ask her to say out loud the things she sees that are make believe, like:
 - ✓ Super powers
 - ✓ Monsters or other creatures
 - ✓ Animals, trees, or objects that talk
 - ✓ Magic potions or spells
 - ✓ Toys that are “alive” or move on their own
 - ✓ Cartoon people who fall off a cliff or are hit by a safe and live
5. Talk out loud to the TV. If you see someone on TV doing something you don't want your child to do, say so, and say why. Let your child talk to the TV, too.
6. When the show is over, or when a commercial is on, ask your child what she liked about the show.
7. Ask what her favorite part of the show you just watched was. Talk about what happened on the show.



DID YOU KNOW?

Dr. Mae Jemison became the first African American woman to enter space on a flight of the shuttle Endeavor in 1992. Dr. Jemison is a medical doctor who worked as a medical officer in the Peace Corps in West Africa.

Colonel Fredrick Gregory is an African American who was the spacecraft commander or pilot on several shuttle missions. As a NASA astronaut he logged 455 hours in space. Before becoming an astronaut, Colonel Gregory was an Air Force test pilot, helicopter pilot, and fighter pilot. Colonel Gregory is a senior administrator with NASA, the U.S. space agency.